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By Tom Precious

### **Governor vetoes 'shoring up' funds for Richardson complex**

But advocates still expect Spitzer's team to find money to shore up buildings this year

ALBANY — Gov. Eliot L. Spitzer has vetoed a bill that would have released money to help shore up the H.H. Richardson complex while it awaits more extensive rehabilitation.

The bipartisan legislation that passed the Assembly and State Senate unanimously sought to transfer \$2.2 million from a state university account to the Richardson Center Corp., a not-for-profit formed last year to redevelop the historic facility.

Spitzer said the move is not needed and illegal.

Despite the veto, advocates of the Richardson complex say they believe the Spitzer administration still supports the project and will find money to do some shoring up work before winter sets in.

"I'm not at all concerned about the executive's commitment to this project," said Assemblyman Sam Hoyt of Buffalo, who sponsored the bill that the governor, a fellow Democrat, vetoed.

Before agreeing to a \$100 million deal largely for rehabilitating the Richardson complex, then-Gov. George E. Pataki previously came up with \$7.2 million for shoring up the crumbling facility that was designed by the American architect as a mental hospital. About \$5 million was spent on stabilization. Hoyt said the remaining \$2.2 million needed to be transferred from a State University of New York account to the not-for-profit entity overseeing the Richardson reuse project.

But in his veto message, Spitzer said the bill "serves the laudable goal, which I share, of preserving one of the state's historic assets; however, this bill is both unnecessary and unconstitutional."

The governor said the state budget this year reappropriated up to \$100 million for the broader Richardson plan, which includes an as-yet unresolved new use for the complex, as well as an architecture museum and visitor center in the tower facility, relocation of the Burchfield-Penney Arts Center from the Buffalo State College Campus to the Richardson grounds and some funding for the Darwin D. Martin House restoration.

“I am advised that these funds have yet to be spent, as the complex rehabilitation project remains in the planning stages,” the governor said.

Hoyt, who chalked up the veto to miscommunication between his office and the governor’s, insisted that the shoring up work still will be done this year while talks proceed on the use of the complex.

In other vetoes, the governor killed measures to create a state taxpayer advocate to resolve disputes with the state Department of Taxation and Finance, and several bills that would have given public employee unions more power in contract negotiations.

Another vetoed measure would have required county social services workers to notify local law enforcement agencies when providing temporary housing for sexual offenders. Spitzer called the bill ambiguous and said offenders often would have relocated to other housing by the time a notice reached law enforcement agencies.

Measures approved include extending Cattaraugus County’s additional 1 percent sales tax until November 2009 and providing about 200 retired members of the Merchant Marines or their unmarried surviving spouses a \$250 bonus for their World War II service.

Spitzer signed a bill making it illegal to use a cell phone to take and transmit photos of people disrobing in an area they expect to be private.

He also signed bill making it an improper practice for a government employer to question an employee without a union representative present if disciplinary action could result.